

AGENDA SUMMARY PAGE
CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF: JUNE 20, 2007

DEPARTMENT: NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES**DIRECTOR: STEPHEN HARSIN**☐ **Consent** ☒ **Discussion****SUBJECT:**

Report on the joint jurisdiction anti-graffiti effort in Southern Nevada - All Wards

Fiscal Impact**No Impact****Augmentation Required****Budget Funds Available****Amount:****Funding Source:****Dept./Division:****PURPOSE/BACKGROUND:**

Over the past few years, there has been an increase in graffiti vandalism on public and private property. The high costs associated with graffiti abatement and prosecuting taggers continue to impact our community. In 2006, the city spent over \$682,000 in labor, paint and materials to abate more than 63,000 incidences of graffiti. As a member of the Southern Nevada Graffiti Coalition, the city along with all stakeholders is leveraging resources to fight against graffiti vandalism. On Saturday, June 23, 2007, the 1st annual Las Vegas Graffiti Awareness Day, a multi-jurisdictional campaign, has been planned to "wipe out" graffiti through community mobilization and neighborhood graffiti abatement efforts. The purpose of this report is to update the Council on the prevention, intervention and prosecution efforts related to graffiti.

RECOMMENDATION:

Report only; no action required

BACKUP DOCUMENTATION:

None

Minutes:

No motion required. A report was given.

STEPHEN HARSIN, Director of Neighborhood Services, stated that, in addition to some of the steps underway to combat graffiti vandalism, Neighborhood Services is acquiring new technology to assist the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (Metro) in documenting graffiti occurrences to help in the prosecution of offenders. Also, through the Neighborhood Planning Section, materials will be put together and made available at classrooms within the community to educate them about graffiti-abatement services.

SCOTT BLACK, Detective with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (Metro) Gang Crimes Bureau, cited some statistics on graffiti. It is the number one property crime, with approximately \$30 million spent in private/public funds to address it. In 2006, over 250 arrests

CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF: JUNE 20, 2007

were made, generated by the Gang Crimes Bureau, Graffiti Investigations Section of Metro; however, department-wide, more than 450 arrests were made, mainly due to the re-training in attitude toward the crime.

With the signing of Assembly Bill 14, which will take effect October 1, 2007, Nevada has become one of the harshest states for prosecution of graffiti offenders. This law provides a tool against graffiti vandals. Graffiti Awareness Day will mark the declaration of war against this crime. Graffiti is a crime associated with big cities, but, with the assistance of the City, Metro intends to take measures to control it and make Las Vegas the model for other cities.

MAYOR GOODMAN asked DETECTIVE BLACK what constituents should do in the event they see a tagger in action, as well as for his input on the opinion of some people that graffiti is an art that should be expressed. DETECTIVE BLACK replied that constituents should call 9-1-1 immediately if they see a tagger in action, because it is considered a crime in progress. He stressed that graffiti is not an art, but rather a property-damage-causing crime used chiefly by gangs to mark territory. Lastly, the Mayor verified with DETECTIVE BLACK that not many offenders convicted of graffiti are going to prison. DETECTIVE BLACK explained that a lot of older offenders are in and out of prison for other crimes, such as car theft, burglary, armed robbery, etc. Recently, two tagger crews were competing for territory and decided to settle it by meeting at a park, but one of the crews brought guns. Unfortunately, two 18-year-old individuals involved in that incident are now awaiting trial for attempted murder.

COUNCILMAN WOLFSON asked DETECTIVE BLACK to break down the more than 400 arrests made in 2006. DETECTIVE BLACK indicated that there is no definitive way to break it down, due to the way in which Metro makes the reports. He noted that he could attest to the arrests generated out of his bureau and clarified that the approximate 450 arrests is a kind estimate; the true sum is closer to 500. The arrests includes suspects charged. COUNCILMAN WOLFSON then requested DETECTIVE BLACK distinguish, under the current law, between the categories of misdemeanor, gross misdemeanor and felony. DETECTIVE BLACK explained that it is divided by the amount of damage. Damage of less than \$250 is a misdemeanor, \$250 to \$4,999 is a gross misdemeanor and anything \$5,000 or above is a felony. In his opinion, the courts are not being harsh enough. On the juvenile side, there are not a lot of deterrents, and, although the law allows prosecution of parents in cases involving minors, the ultimate decision lies with the Juvenile Courts. But he has seen some progress. Recently three 18-year-olds were arrested for tagging an overpass sign near McCarran Airport. They each received one year in Clark County Detention Center. This sentence would not have occurred two years ago.

COUNCILMAN WOLFSON directed that a statistical report be given to the City Council within one year, to include data on how many people have been cited, arrested, charged, convicted under the categories of misdemeanor, gross misdemeanor and felony and their penalties. DETECTIVE BLACK indicated that, with the forthcoming changes, he will be able to provide that within a year.

In answer to COUNCILMAN REESE's question regarding the purchase of cameras, MR. HARSIN indicated that his department will be purchasing thirty-five-hundred-dollar equipment

CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF: JUNE 20, 2007

for the painters to take pictures of the graffiti before it is abated. This picture is then downloaded into a depository to assist Metro in the documentation and prosecution of taggers.

COUNCILMAN REESE said he thought cameras were being purchased for placement in the neighborhoods, which he feels would be advantageous for the City. This would help catch taggers in action. A reward program would also help. MR. HARSIN indicated that Crime Stoppers has such a program, and the City has an ordinance that allows a contribution to be made for any information that would aid in the prosecution of taggers.

COUNCILMAN REESE instructed CITY ATTORNEY JERBIC to research the legality of contributing some of his campaign funds toward a tagger reward program. DETECTIVE BLACK assured Council that the aggregate capability under the new law will enable Metro to add all the charges for identified taggers and to make arrests on felony offenses. Eighteen- to twenty-year-olds will probably not go to prison, but rather probation with a mandatory ten-day jail sentence, along with a minimum of 100 hours of community service covering graffiti in the community and mandatory fines. The new law regarding implements will also aid in prosecution.

COUNCILWOMAN TARKANIAN agreed with DETECTIVE BLACK that drastic measures need to be taken with controlling graffiti, because millions of dollars that could be put to better use are being wasted on graffiti.

